

# 102-Year-Old Master Farmer Brings History To Life

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1900. He willed the farm to dad." Weir remembers meeting his first wife at a party. He said, "We used to have parties held at different places. I was invited. I took one girl to the party and while I was there, I saw another one I liked better! That was Rhoda. I went with Rhoda five years before we were married. I was married April 2, 1914."

But before that, in the winter of 1912, Weir attended a 12-week course at Penn State, studying soils, crops, dairy, bookkeeping, and poultry. About 50 classmates — including two women — took

the course. Weir remembers passing through the Creamery for one of his classes and the original Old Main on the campus.

In spite of modern advances, farming today still breeds its share of drudgery, but Weir has his own definition of drudgery.

"After we were married, we milked 30 cows by hand for a couple of years. That was drudgery! We got up at 3:30 a.m. and lit our lanterns — you know there was no electricity at that time — lit our lanterns and hung them in the barn. Milked a bunch of stable cows and then hung the lanterns in another stable."

During the next 20 years, Weir and Rhoda raised nine children. The oldest, Anna, died of pneumonia when she was nine.

Weir's crop and cattle experience is spotted with award-winning good times and heart-breaking hard times.

In 1938, he was recognized for a three-year average corn yield of 121 bushels. One of the fields had been fertilized by airplane. That's the same year that he received the Master Farmer award.

"You were supposed to be just a little better farmer than the average. And you were supposed to be something like a school director. I

was a school director for 24 years, and a member of church and community organizations."

Throughout his life as a dairy farmer, Weir lost three herds to disease.

"First herd we lost was to foot and mouth disease. That was very contagious. That was in the neighborhood of 1918 or '20. I remember we dug a ditch 70 feet long, seven feet wide and seven feet deep. We drove the whole 38 head in a ditch and the state trooper shot them down like rats. I remember I led the bull in there by the staff. Of course, I got out of there before the shootin'! They covered them with

lime first and then finished up with ground. The next herd we lost was to TB and the next one was to Bang's. We lost three herds."

Weir said that the other two herds were taken to a slaughterhouse in Harrisburg. He also said a cow milking 50 pounds a day was considered a pretty good cow.

"Now Paul (Weir's son) had a first calf heifer that milked 100 pounds a day. The second calf, she milked more than that. Two milkings! I never had a cow that milked over 96 pounds."

Weir bought and sold many farms in the course of his lifetime. In the 1930s and '40s, Weir purchased several farms in Williams Grove Road area of Mechanicsburg, hoping to ensure a future in farming for his sons. Four went into farming for themselves and those farms remain in the Strock name. Three are still active farms, two in dairy and one in turkeys, hogs, and crops.

Weir has outlived two wives and one son, and realizes good health and family as blessings from God. At last count, his family has grown to include 28 grandchildren, 45 great-grandchildren, and eight great-great grandchildren with three on the way.

Weir says that he wouldn't know how to farm today. But after hearing his oral history, family members wondered if they could have farmed as he did.

The Weir family recorded Weir's account of life in the past century. In the next five years, family members hope not only to see the next century but also the next millennium. They want to pen what they see, hear, feel, know and experience for the coming generations.

A family member said, "It will become a living historical link in the chain that connects this generation to the next, just as Weir linked us to the rumble of cannons at Gettysburg."

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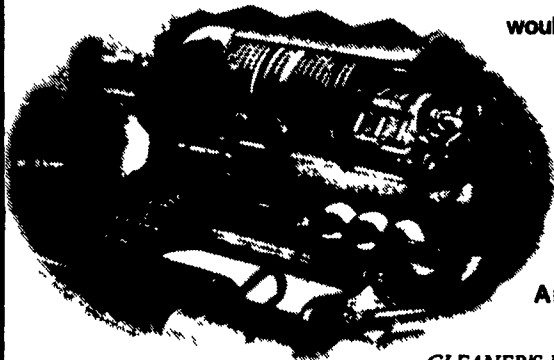
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